

THE LIVING MAN'S COMPLAINT

[La 3:39-41](#)

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, October 16th, 1842, at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester.

“Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.” [La 3:39-41](#)

IN all this congregation there is perhaps not a single individual who is not possessed of some kind of religion, and who has not some hope that **that religion will take him safe to heaven. But were we to examine into the foundation of this religion, were we to dig deep in order to see the pillars on which it stands, it is to be feared that the hope of very few would be found to rest on a solid basis.**

Most persons take their religion upon trust, without any scrutiny or examination. Men do not act thus in natural things; they do not take things upon trust in the affairs of time and sense. Knowing the wide and almost universal prevalence of fraud and deception, most persons examine with great minuteness whatever they purchase; and generally speaking, in proportion to the value of the article will it be more minutely scrutinized, and the greater pains be taken to detect the real from the counterfeit. Yet in the case of religion, that important thing on which eternity depends, men will take it up without examination as to its foundation in their own souls, and pass through life well satisfied that they are bound for heaven, without one heart-searching cry to God whether it be His work in their hearts or not.

If then the value set upon a thing is exhibited by the scrutiny exercised upon it, religion, taking the great majority of cases, would appear to have no value at all. It is taken up at random by hundreds, without any personal knowledge of what vital godliness is, and therefore no inquiry is ever made in the soul, whether it be of that kind which will stand in the trying hour.

Yet God in His Word has not left us altogether destitute of marks whereby the state of the soul may be examined and scrutinized; but He has in His blessed Scriptures laid down certain unerring tests, the possession or non-possession of which determines the possession or non-possession of vital godliness. Nor can it be said that a minister stands up faithfully who does not bring these marks and tests to bear upon the consciences of the people to whom he preaches, that his hearers may have an evidence whether their religion came down from the Father of lights, or was stolen by their own pilfering fingers,

and was palmed upon them by the craft of Satan. I think our text, if the Lord enable me rightly to handle it, will furnish us with some such tests and marks as I have alluded to, and thus be a means in the Spirit's hands whereby we may come to some decision whether or not the work of grace is begun, and is being carried on in our souls.

The prophet, speaking in the name of the Church, says, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"

I. Now there is one word on which the text turns, one pin or pivot on which the truth contained in it revolves, and that is the word **"living"**. "Wherefore doth a **living** man complain?" If this be the case, we cannot move a single step forward until we have examined this little word, and come to some decision as to what is meant by it. Who then is "a living man?" That question must be settled at the outset. I believe then that by the expression is meant a **spiritually** living man, one into whom the Holy Ghost has breathed a new and divine nature, and brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light—a man whom He has made eternally alive, and by His sovereign and supernatural operation has quickened from a death in trespasses and sins.

But this great, unspeakably great and mighty revolution cannot take place in a man without his being more or less sensible of it. How sensible our bodies are to even the minutest touch! Not a pain can affect any member without some sensation being communicated to the whole. The heart cannot palpitate, the head cannot ache, the cheek cannot flush, the hands cannot burn, without distinct feeling and perceptible consciousness. Shall our bodies then have all these distinct perceptions of everything that affects them and shall our souls have a divine operation carried on in them by the hand of God, and yet not be conscious of any feeling at all? Shall a man be tremblingly alive to every minute thing that affects his body, and yet not alive to that mighty revolution which the Holy Ghost effects in his soul? No; depend upon it, whatever work there be going on in the soul, there must be some distinct and perceptible feeling precisely corresponding to the work so carried on. If the work be deep and powerful, equally deep and powerful will be the feelings; if the work be less decided and less intense, the weaker and more indistinct will be the spiritual sensations; and if the work be utterly absent, then will there be an utter absence of feeling.

Now among the many feelings and sensations which exist in every divinely quickened soul, we may specially instance **complaint** as one, and as such it is clearly pointed out in our text. "Wherefore should a living man

complain?” As though **complaint** was the mark of life, and as if he who never complained was dead in trespasses and sins. But the text says, “**Wherefore** should a living man complain?” as though it asked, “What causes this complaint? Whence does it spring, and what is its ground?”

To this inquiry we may reply,

1. He complains **of his sins**; and this complaint on account of sin is one of the first marks of the spiritual existence of the life of God in his soul. The spiritual feeling of sin is indispensable to the feeling of salvation. A sense of the malady must ever precede, and prepare the soul for a believing reception and due apprehension of the remedy. Wherever God intends to reveal His Son with power, wherever He intends to make the gospel to be “a joyful sound,” He makes the conscience feel and groan under the burden of sin. Sure I am that when a man is labouring under the burden of sin, he will be full of complaint. The Bible records hundreds of the complaints of God’s people under the burden of sin. “My wounds stink and are corrupt,” cries one, “because of my foolishness. I am troubled: I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long” [Ps 38:5-6](#). “My soul,” cries another, “is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave” [Ps 88:3](#). “He hath led me,” groans out a third, “and brought me into darkness, but not into light” [La 3:2](#). A living man needs must cry under such circumstances. He cannot carry the burden without complaining of its weight. He cannot feel the arrow sticking in his conscience without groaning under the pain. He cannot have the worm gnawing his vitals without complaining of its venomous tooth. He cannot feel that God is incensed against him, without bitterly complaining that the Lord is his enemy.

Spiritual complaint then is a mark of spiritual life, and is one which God recognises as such. “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself” [Jer 31:18](#). It shows that he has something to mourn over, something to make him groan being burdened; that sin has been opened up to him in its hateful malignancy; that it is a trouble and distress to his soul; that he cannot roll it like a sweet morsel under his tongue, but that it is found out by the penetrating eye, and punished by the chastening hand of God.

2. But the living man will complain not only of sin, but **on account of the absence of those things which he desires to feel**. Thus he will complain that God hides His face from him; that the groans and sighs

of his heart never appear to reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth; that the Lord does not appear in his soul; that He does not sweetly reveal His peace in his conscience; that He does not favour him with testimonies that he is eternally His, and is interested in the blood and love of His dear Son; and that, with all his sighs and cries, he cannot bring down the anxiously desired blessing into his heart, nor feel Christ formed in him the hope of glory.

3. He will complain too **of the inward workings of his base nature, and of the deep corruption of his desperately wicked heart.** He will groan under the temptations and fiery darts of the wicked one, and the dreadful thoughts that are so violently injected into his mind. And at other times, he will complain of hardness of heart, of darkness of mind, of barrenness of soul, of complete helplessness and impotency to anything spiritually good. He will complain that sin will work in him; that, do what he will, he cannot do anything to please himself, and therefore he can do nothing to please God. The living man will be always a complaining man. He will be more or less one of those of whom the prophet speaks, who “sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” [Eze 9:4](#). Like righteous Lot in Sodom, he will “vex his righteous soul day by day” with a sight and sense of his internal wickedness.

II. But the prophet in the text asks a question, “**Wherefore** doth a living man complain?” As though he would remonstrate with him for complaining, and assure him that he had after all no good ground nor solid foundation for his complaint; for he adds, “a man for the punishment of his sins?” As though he should say, “Let a living man be full of sorrows. Are they not all richly deserved? Have not his sins merited every affliction bodily or mental that can come upon him?” But we must not understand by the word “punishment,” anything of a vindictive nature. God never punishes the sins of His elect penally; that is, not as He punishes the sins of the reprobate. The eternal covenant forbids this. “Fury is not in Me,” saith the Lord [Isa 27:4](#). The elect are accepted in Jesus, are pardoned in Him, are complete in Him. This is their eternal and unalterable covenant standing-the fruit and effect of their everlasting union with the Son of God. But though this forbids punishment in its strictly penal sense, it by no means excludes **chastisement**. Thus we are not to understand by the word “punishment” in the text, the infliction of God’s righteous wrath-that foretaste of eternal damnation with which, sometimes even in this life, He visits the ungodly; but it signifies that chastisement which is the privilege of the heir, and distinguishes him from

the bastard. It is under this chastisement, then, that the living man is brought to complain, and he will often see in the afflictions that befall him, the rod of the Lord as the chastisement of sin. When he thus sees light in God's light, he may justly say, "**Wherefore** doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Are they not chastisements, not punishments; the rod of a Father's correction, not the vindictive stroke of offended justice?

Perhaps his property is lost through unlooked-for circumstances, or the roguery of others; and he is brought down from comparative affluence to be a poor man. When he can see that this is a chastisement for his pride and carnality in former days, he is able to put his mouth in the dust. Or if the Lord afflict him in his body so that he shall scarcely enjoy a day's health, when he sees and feels how he abused his health and strength when he possessed them, and at the same time perceives from how many hurtful snares his bodily affliction instrumentally preserves him, he is able at times to bear it meekly and patiently. He may have, too, serious afflictions in his family, or find, like David, "his house not so with God" as he could wish; but when he sees that a sickly wife or disobedient children are but so many strokes of chastisement, and far lighter than his sins demand; when he sees that they come from the hand of love, and not from eternal wrath-that they are the stripes of a Father, not the vindictive strokes of an angry Judge, he feels then that love is mingled with chastisement, and his spirit is meekened, and his heart softened, and he is brought down to say, "Wherefore should a living man complain?" Why should he complain, when these very severe stripes are chastisements inseparable from heirship, and when they come from a kind hand which is thus conforming him to the image of Jesus Christ?

Now, until a man gets there he cannot but complain. Until he is brought spiritually to see that all his afflictions, griefs and sorrows are chastisements and not punishments, and is able to receive them as the stripes of love, he must and will complain. But, generally speaking, before the Lord lifts up the light of His countenance upon him, before He gives him a sense of peace in his conscience, He will bring him "to accept," as the Scripture speaks [Le 26:41](#), "of the punishment of his iniquity". He will thus receive these strokes of chastisement with a subdued spirit; he will confess that they are justly deserved; and his obstinacy and rebelliousness being in a measure broken, he will lie as a poor and needy supplicant at the foot of the cross.

III. But we pass on to show from the words of the text what is the effect of this chastisement. “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.”

Now, I believe in my conscience that there are hundreds, I might say thousands, of professors who have never known in the whole course of their religious profession what it is to have “searched and tried their ways;” to have been put into the balances and weighed in the scales of divine justice; or to have stood cast and condemned in their own feelings before God as the heart-searching Jehovah. From such a trying test, from such an unerring touchstone, they have ever shrunk. And why? Because they have an inward consciousness that their religion will not bear a strict and scrutinizing examination. Like the deceitful tradesman, who allures his customers into the back shop where the light of the sun does not shine, in order to elude detection when he spreads his flimsy madeup goods before them, so those who have an inward consciousness that their religion is not of heavenly origin, shun the light. As the Lord says, “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d; but he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” [Joh 3:20-21](#). I desire on this point to speak to your consciences. If you know nothing of having from time to time your ways searched and tried by God’s Word, or if you rise up with bitterness against an experimental, heart-searching ministry that would try them for you, it shows that there is some rotten spot in you-something that you dare not bring to the light. The candle of the Lord has not searched the hidden secrets of your heart; nor have you cried with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” [Ps 139:23-24](#)

The effect, then, of the chastisement spoken of in the text is to produce this self-examination. “Let us search and try our ways.” The man under divine chastisement begins to examine the root of his religion. He can no longer take it upon credit, but he looks into the very foundation of his profession-into its commencement and progress, and at all the circumstances connected with his first setting out, to try whether he received his religion from God or from man.

But the text speaks of “ways”. “Let us search and try our ways.” What are these ways? Some of these are **ways of the flesh. The man has fallen perhaps into circumstances of temptation; Satan has spread snares for his feet, and he has become entangled in the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the**

eye, or the pride of life [1Jo 2:16](#). Chastisements are sent to bring him out of these snares; and their effect is that he begins to “search his ways;” and as the Spirit of the Lord as a Spirit of judgment and of godly fear operates in his conscience, he finds that these ways were not good, but were ways of sin and death.

But as he searches and tries his ways, he begins to find that not only his **worldly** ways, but that his **religious** ways also will not bear a strict investigation. As the light of truth falls into his conscience, and is attended with a divine quickening in God’s way [Ps 119:37](#), everything is brought under the strict scrutiny of this light. As the apostle says, “All things that are reprov’d are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light” [Eph 5:13](#).

When a man thus begins to examine his ways since he first spiritually felt the power of eternal realities, they are all weighed up in his conscience one by one. He begins by examining the root of his religious profession, and looks at its very first commencement-at the time and manner of his first setting out. Did he begin with the Lord, or did the Lord begin with him? What was the foundation and origin of that profession of vital godliness in which he now finds himself? Was it taken up from worldly motives? Was any pecuniary advantage gained thereby? Was it founded on personal affection? Did it proceed from the persuasion of father, or mother, or Sunday school teacher? If conscience is here on his side, and he finds no corrupt root at the foundation, he is encouraged to proceed a little further. He will look at his first convictions, and he is encouraged to believe from their nature and effects that they were of God. This leads him on to look at his reception of the gospel. How did he receive the gospel? Was it “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power?” [1Co 2:4](#) Did he “receive it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh in those that believe?” [1Th 2:13](#). And how did he receive the doctrines of grace? Did he get them from men? Did he receive them with the outward ear only, or did they drop into his soul with dew, unction, and power? And what was their effect upon him? Did they bring contrition into his soul? Did faith receive them, love embrace them, and hope anchor in them? If he has attended to the ordinance of baptism, and is a member of a gospel church, he will search and examine how he was led into that ordinance, and what induced him to make a public profession. He will thus search and try his ways, and bring to the test of truth and conscience the whole of his religious course, that he may have some satisfactory testimony whether his ways have been directed by the

leadings of the Spirit, and have sprung from the inward teachings of that divine Instructor, or whether they are from the self-will of the flesh, from nature under the garb of religion, or from Satan's delusions as an angel of light. This is "making straight paths for our feet," as the Holy Ghost directs [Heb 12:13](#); "examining ourselves whether we be in the faith" [2Co 13:5](#); "judging ourselves that we might not be judged" [1Co 11:31](#). Thus the soul of David was engaged when he appealed to the Lord [Ps 139:1](#), "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me."

But the Lord must search and try us by His Spirit before we shall search and try ourselves. As the prophet speaks, "It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees" [Zep 1:12](#). And the Lord often makes use of trials and afflictions to bring His candle to search all the inward parts [Pr 20:27](#). It is from some experience of these searchings that I am led to search others. I cannot take my own religion upon trust, and therefore I cannot take other people's. I cannot receive for myself any religion except that which the Lord is pleased with His own blessed mouth to drop into my soul, and with His own hand to work in my heart; and why should I receive yours if it do not come in the same way? I am well satisfied that no religion but what came **from** heaven can **take** a man to heaven; that there is no solid hope but that which God imparts, no genuine love but that which God sheds abroad in the heart, no filial confidence but such as arises from the light of God's countenance. I am perfectly satisfied that nothing else can support a man in the trying hour-nothing else can take him through the dark valley, or land him safe on Canaan's shore. Therefore I should not be honest to you if I did not weigh up your religion in the same scale in which I weigh mine, and apply the same standard to it as to my own. I know such will be the effect when the Lord begins to search us, and there will be a cry in the soul, "Let us search and try our ways." [La 3:40](#)

And what, for the most part, will be the fruit and result of a man's thus searching and trying his ways, but that he will find his ways not good, that he has backslidden from the Lord, that he has taken much upon credit, that in thousands of instances he has put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter? He will find too that he has invariably been deceived, except when the Lord has been pleased to instruct him; cast down, except when the Lord was pleased to uphold him; deluded by the devil and his own heart, except when the Lord was pleased mercifully to undeceive him, and show

him Satan's devices. And the end of all his searching will be that "in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

IV. But we gather from the text another effect of this humbling experience. It leads him to cry, "Let us **turn again to the Lord:**" as though he had done nothing else but turn from Him; as though every way not of God's instruction in the soul had been a way of death; every path not of God's leading, a way of error. When he is brought here, to be feelingly destitute of creature righteousness, wisdom, and strength, to see that he has shown himself to be a fool every time he trusted in his own wisdom, that he has fallen every time he trusted in his own strength-when he is brought to be thus feelingly destitute, thus experimentally helpless, then there will be this sincere and hearty turning to the Lord. "I will arise and go to my father," said the repenting prodigal. Thus the effect of these exercises is to bring him to personal dealings with Jehovah. He must now have a religion not to be cloaked over and taken for granted, but a close, personal, individual religion before God, and in his own conscience. Nothing else will ever satisfy me. I would sooner be taking my full swing in the world than have a name to live and be dead-with a form of godliness while I denied its power; and I believe, if you are honest men and women, such are your feelings also.

When the soul then is brought to this point, there will be a turning again to the Lord, as to the only source of all vital godliness-the whole and sole Saviour from the wrath to come. The soul feels that in His favour is life, and that His lovingkindness is better than life itself; that in the smiles of His countenance peace and joy alone are to be found, and that the manifestations of His presence is a begun happiness-a begun heaven below. But until there is this complaining on account of sin, and this searching of our ways, there is not a "turning again to the Lord." O how people deceive themselves! O the depth of human hypocrisy! A man may kneel down and offer up what he sincerely believes to be prayer, and may call **that** personal dealing with God, when all the time the Spirit of grace and supplications has never visited his heart. To have personal dealings with God is to be taken by the Spirit into the presence of His heart-searching eye, to be stript of the hypocrisy of the flesh, to be emptied, for the time, of superstition and self-righteousness, and to feel as though there were not a single individual on the face of the globe but yourself and God; as if you were standing on some solitary spot, and communing with God, and He with you. To be brought here is to know something of close work. I do not believe that a man will be saved who does not know more or less

of this; he will never know anything of the sweetness and preciousness of a revealed Jesus, until he is brought to this close work; to feel as though he stood alone with the eye of God fixed upon him, as if there were no other object, and as if that look penetrated through all the covers of nature and hypocrisy into those depths of conscience, into which the eye of God alone can come. When a man is brought to this, he is not to be fobbed off any longer with pretences; he is brought to such close quarters that nothing can satisfy him but a testimony from God's own lips breathed into his soul, to raise up faith, hope, love, and confidence in his heart.

Now, look through all your religion. I speak to those who make a profession. Is there any of this work going on in your conscience? Believe me, there must be some heart-and-conscience-work of this kind before a man can have a testimony that he is a child of God. And this will be repeatedly taking place in the soul. After long seasons of deadness and carelessness when life seems well-nigh extinct, there will be a turning again to the Lord, a casting our back upon the world and the flesh, and a setting of the face toward Zion.

V. But the prophet goes on to say, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands." As though there was a great deal of lifting up the hands without the lifting up of the heart, and as though the prophet felt there had been too much of this even in his own case, for though he speaks here in the name of the Church, he includes himself also as one of the offending parties. When, then, the Lord lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, when He makes the living man complain on account of deserved chastisement for his sins, and thus brings him to search and try his ways, He raises up an earnest cry in his soul. "Let us lift up our heart with our hands," and not the hands without the heart; not the mere bended knee; not the mere grave and solemn countenance, that easiest and most frequent cover of hypocrisy; not the mere form of prayer, that increasing idol of the day, but the lifting up of the heart with the hand. This is the only true prayer, when the heart is poured out before the throne of grace, the Spirit interceding for us and within us with groanings that cannot be uttered. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." [Joh 4:24](#) He is not to be pleased with man-made prayer, nor the "vain repetitions" of daily liturgies. Garments, postures, forms and ceremonies of man's invention draw not down His approbation. The contrite heart and broken spirit, the inward panting of the soul after His manifested presence, the heaving sigh and penitential

tear will be regarded by Him when He will turn away from lip service and “bodily exercise.” [1Ti 4:8](#)

VI. But there is much also implied in the words, **“God in the heavens”** This expression represents Him as seated far above all heavens, enthroned in light, majesty, and glory unspeakable; and yet sitting on His throne of mercy and grace to bless the soul that waits upon Him, full of love and compassion for the poor and needy who lifts up his heart together with the hand, that he may receive pardon and peace out of Jesus’ fulness, and pants with unutterable longings that the lord Himself would graciously smile and beam love and favour into his soul. This lifting up of the heart—the only true and acceptable prayer—no man can create in himself. God, who works all things after the counsel of His own will, can alone work in us thus “to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” Nature cannot, with all her efforts, and all her counterfeit imitations of vital godliness, accomplish this spiritual sacrifice. She may cut her flesh with lancets, and cry, “Baal, hear us!” from morning till evening, but she cannot bring down the holy fire from heaven. She can lift the hand, but she cannot lift up the heart. Depend upon it, that in this spiritual intercourse with the living God, out of sight and out of reach of the most refined hypocrite and self-deceiver, much of the power of vital godliness lies. This lifting up of the heart when no eye sees and no ear hears, in the daily and often hourly transactions of life, in the lonely chamber, and on the midnight bed, surrounded perhaps by the world, and yet in spirit separate from it—is a secret known only to the living family of God.

Here, then, that I may recapitulate the outline of what has been said, are some marks and testimonies which God has laid down in His Word by which the present state of every man may be more or less clearly determined. Now if you do not wish to deceive yourselves, if God has made you honest, if He has planted His fear in your heart, if He has begun and is carrying on a good work in you, there will be evidences of the existence of the life of God within. **Life** is the commencement of salvation as an inward reality, for whatever the eternal purposes of God are, or whatever standing the vessel of mercy has in Christ previous to effectual calling, there is no more movement in the soul Godward till life is imparted, than there is natural life and motion in a breathless corpse that lies interred in the churchyard. But wherever divine life is implanted, there will be certain fruits and feelings that spring out of this life. One fruit will be **complaint**, and this will arise sometimes from a feeling of the burden of sin, and at others from a sense of merited chastisement from

God on account of it. But wherever this complaining is spiritual, there will be accompanying it “an accepting the punishment of our iniquity,” and “a putting of our mouth in the dust.” Thus where there is spiritual life there will be complaint, confession, and submission; the effect being meekness, brokenness, and humility. This breaks to pieces self-conceit and self-justification, and the result is a searching and trying our ways whether they are of God. The fruit of this search will be, for the most part, a solemn and painful conviction that the greater part have been in the flesh: or, at least, there will be many anxious suspicions which cannot be relieved except by an express testimony from the Lord Himself. This produces a going out of soul unto Him, the cry now being, “Let us turn again to the Lord;” and towards Him the heart turns as to the only source and author of every good and perfect gift. As the quickened soul knows that He is a heart-searching God, this appeal will purge away much hypocrisy and insincerity, and deepen uprightness, sincerity, and godly integrity. And the blessed fruit and end of all this sifting work will be a coming down of gracious answers, divine testimonies, smiles of the Saviour’s loving countenance, soft whispers of God’s eternal favour, and the blessed witness of the Spirit within.

Thus I think we have laid down in the text a clear outline of the path in which the redeemed walk. And if so, may I not from these words of inspired truth make an appeal to your hearts and consciences whether the Lord has led you at all in this path? Or have you taken up your religion as a man takes up a glove in a hosier’s shop-after trying a good many, selecting that which best fits his hand? Thus some here, perhaps, out of the numerous sects and parties spread upon the counter of the religious world, have taken up the Arminian, or the Calvinist, the Independent, or the Baptist glove, and wear their profession as some external distinction. But, my friends, true religion is not to be thus taken up or laid down, where it springs from what God Himself has wrought with divine power in the conscience. And wherever He works, there will be fruits and effects following.

But some perhaps here cannot at present get much beyond complaint. But this is a mark of life; and He “who has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” [Php 1:6](#) He will never leave the soul to die in its complaint. This is “a sickness not unto death,” for “the Lord will bring health and cure.” He who accepts the punishment of sins here shall never be punished hereafter. He who is brought to search and try his ways-who is made honest by God’s internal teaching, will in the

end find his ways to be indeed “issues from death.” He who is brought to lift up the heart together with the hands to heaven, will bring down **from** heaven what his heart goes after. God will answer his desire, and fill his heart with His blessed favours even to overflowing.

But we may, by way of conclusion, give another turn to the first clause of our text, “Wherefore doth a living man complain?” With all his trials and temptations, troubles and exercises, has he any real cause to “murmur,” as the margin reads? Is he not ten thousand times better off than those whose eyes stand out with fatness, and who have more than heart can wish? Say that he is a poor afflicted creature-sin tormenting and harassing him every day, and that he meets continually with trouble at home and abroad, so that he thinks no poor wretch is altogether so miserable. But after he has exhausted all his piteous tale, it may still be said to him, “Wherefore doth a living man complain?” Has he not eternal life in his soul? Is he not an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ? Surely instead of complaining he has reason to rejoice-reason to say, with all his burdens, all his sorrows, all his diseases, “Wherefore should I complain? Is it not better to suffer with Jesus, that I may reign with Him? Is it not better “through much tribulation to enter the kingdom,” than to enjoy all that the world calls good and great, and find eternal perdition at the end?”